UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR SEES NEW REVENUE-SHARING BILL AS BOON TO WATERFOWL

A new refuge revenue-sharing bill, signed into law by President Johnson, is expected to be of great importance in restoring continental waterfowl populations, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall said today.

The legislation is aimed at facilitating the Federal purchase of wetlands, such as in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota for waterfowl nesting, resting, and feeding.

Public Law 88-523 provides an alternative formula which many county governments may use to share in proceeds of the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the Department of the Interior. First payments under the new formula will be made after June 30, 1966.

An estimated 80 percent of the young ducks reared in the contiguous 48 States are produced in the three Midwest States. Nesting ducks are attracted to the area by millions of water-filled depressions, or "potholes," created by glaciers.

Attempts to purchase and maintain this wetlands "duck factory" as part of the refuge system have lagged, County governments generally have been unwilling to have the private lands acquired until they were assured of annual compensation that would be generally comparable to tax receipts.

Fish and Wildlife Service Commissioner Clarence F. Pautzke said the new law is expected to accelerate the purchase of 950,000 acres and lease of 1,150,000 acres of wetlands. Approximately three-fourths the acreage is in the glaciated region of the Dakotas and Minnesota.

The new legislation provides that many counties may elect to receive annual payments of three-fourths of one percent of the value of the refuge lands within their boundaries. The value of the lands will be redetermined every five years to reflect current values.

The older formula, in effect since 1935, provides for payment of the counties of 25 percent of the net receipts which come from operation of the refuges, such as proceeds from the disposition of animals and agricultural products and from leases.

Counties in which there are National Refuges, or portions of refuges, acquired in fee by the United States may elect either formula. The older formula will continue in effect in areas where refuges were created by changes in the use of land already in the public domain, and the primary use of the land is for wildlife.

The new law, as the old, requires that payments to the counties must be used for county roads and schools.

Congress approved an accelerated acquisition program in 1961 as an emergency measure and authorized an advance appropriation of \$105 million to be used for land purchase in a seven-year period. Actual advance appropriations to date total \$25 million.

Beginning in 1969, the advance appropriations will be repaid from proceeds of Federal "duck stamps," which migratory bird hunters are required to purchase. Meanwhile, duck stamp revenues will be used almost entirely for the part of the acquisition program not financed by the advance appropriations.

By June 30 this year the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife had acquired or contracted to purchase 164,242 acres and had obtained easements on another 90,886 acres. In the latter category, landowners agree not to drain, burn, or fill the wetlands.

Commissioner Pautzke said that while the land acquisition program for refuges has not kept pace with plans, the acreage acquired during the past four years is five times that of the previous comparable period, and it is more than all of the acquisition for refuges in the preceding 19 years.

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